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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

At the 3727th meeting of the Security Council, held on 20 December 1996 in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in Croatia", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council has considered the report of the Secretary-General of 5 December 1996 (S/1996/1011 and Corr.1), submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1019 (1995) on Croatia.

"The Security Council acknowledges notable progress in the humanitarian situation, in particular measures taken by the Government of Croatia to meet the most urgent humanitarian needs of the Croatian Serb population.

"Although the security situation has improved slightly, the Security Council, however, expresses its concern at continued acts of harassment, looting and physical attacks against Croatian Serbs and, in particular, involvement by Croatian uniformed military and police officials in a number of those incidents. It calls upon the Government of Croatia to intensify its efforts to improve the security situation and to ensure adequate security conditions for the local Serb population including the urgent re-establishment of a functioning court system in the former sectors North and South.

"The Security Council is deeply concerned that in spite of its previous requests there has been little progress on the issue of the return of the Croatian Serb refugees and urges the Government of Croatia to adopt a comprehensive approach in order to facilitate the return of refugees originating from Croatia to their homes of origin throughout Croatia. It deplores the continued failure by the Government of Croatia to safeguard effectively their property rights, especially the situation where many of those Serbs who have returned to the former sectors have been unable to regain possession of their properties. The Council calls upon the Government of Croatia to apply immediately proper procedures to the question of property rights and to stop all forms of discrimination against

the Croatian Serb population in the provision of social benefits and reconstruction assistance.

"The Security Council is deeply concerned at reports that the new amnesty law is not being implemented in a fair and equitable manner. It underlines that equitable application of that law is vital for building confidence and promoting reconciliation in Croatia as well as for the peaceful reintegration of the Region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium.

"The Security Council stresses the importance of the commitments undertaken by the Government of Croatia in relation to the Council of Europe, including its signature of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and expects that the Government of Croatia will implement those commitments fully and without delay.

"The Security Council reiterates its call upon the Government of Croatia to cooperate fully with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and to conduct investigations into and the prosecution of all persons accused of serious violations of international humanitarian law, especially those committed in the course of military operations in 1995.

"The Security Council will remain seized of the matter and requests that the Secretary-General continue to report on the situation, in any case no later than 10 March 1997."